

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **A-1**

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Moscow Demanding More From Eastern Bloc Economies

Second of Three Articles

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Washington Post Foreign Service

BUDAPEST—Every year the managers of Minosegi, Hungary's leading producer of women's shoes, bargain with the Soviets over the quality and quantity of footwear they will send to the Soviet Union the next year.

The Russians used to be content to get whatever shoes they could from the Hungarians. Style didn't matter much; durability did. Lately, Soviet purchasers have gotten choosier. They want more fashionable models. They want what Hungary has been selling to America.

Across Eastern Europe, factory managers and government officials say the Soviets are becoming

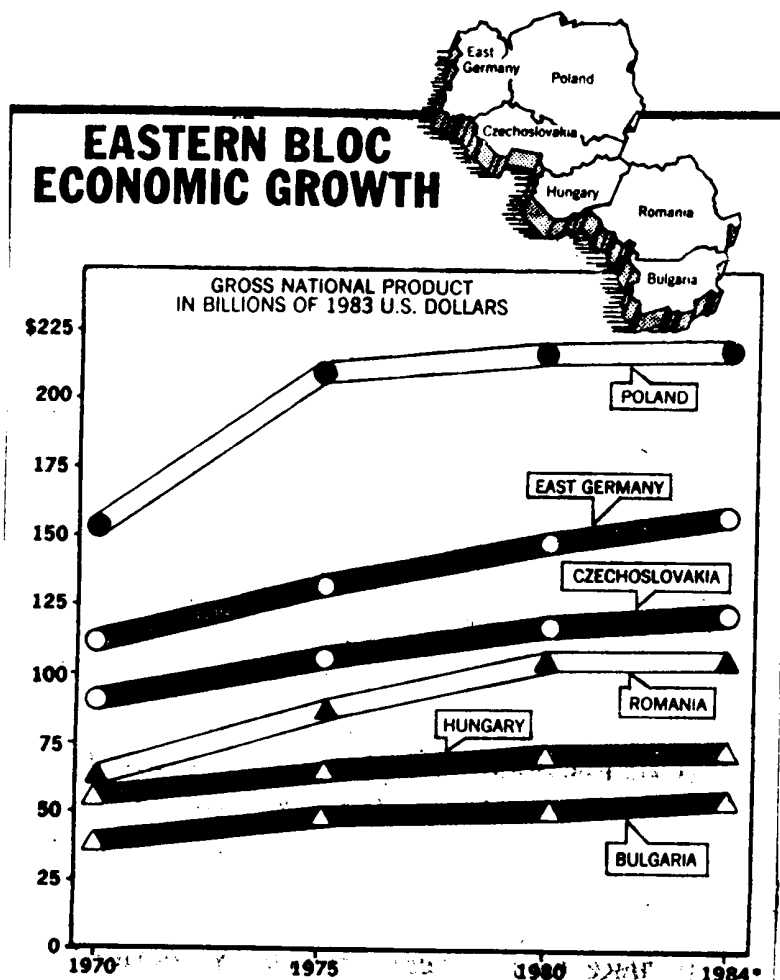
more demanding about the quality of manufactured products they receive from their allies. Up to now, Moscow has traded oil and natural gas with its socialist partners in return for machinery and equipment, consumer items and

IN THE SOVIET SHADOW

ECONOMIC MALAISE

food. It was no secret to Kremlin officials that many of the top-of-the-line items produced in Eastern Europe were being set aside for hard-currency sales to the West. Now, an economic slowdown in the Soviet Union has made Moscow less tolerant of this fact.

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*1984 figures are estimates

SOURCES: 1970-80 figures are from CIA Handbook of Economic Statistics, 1984; 1984 figures are from PlanEcon, Inc. estimate, March 1985.